

# Local Imam Helps Support USAID Initiative

## Challenge

Arslanbob is an ethnic Uzbek village in a remote mountain area of Kyrgyzstan, considered by many local Muslims to be a holy region. Due to its geographic isolation, a large group of unoccupied youth, and government neglect, Arslanbob has become a prime recruiting ground for the banned Hizb-ut-Tahrir (a group that advocates a single Islamic caliphate for the region). Hizbuti activities drew the attention of USAID who saw the need to involve religious leaders in any potential activities undertaken.



Photo: CAIP Kyrgyzstan Staff

Students carry new sports equipment to newly-refurbished gym.

***“Helping people is holy, whether it comes from believers or non-believers... It is good to know that there is such an organization that listens to and helps with the needs of the people.”***

**- Imam Anvarjan Kadyraliev**

## Results

The Imam was so impressed with the community project that he committed over \$1500 in weekly mosque contributions toward the community's next project. While the gymnasium is a constructive addition to the community of Arslanbob, it is really of secondary importance - the religious leadership in Arslanbob now understands and accepts the values inherent in the community spirit that CAIP helped them create. Arslanbob community members have indeed stronger confidence now that their religious leaders support their initiatives to reinforce their social fabric, and to make them less susceptible to any potential conflict.

## Initiative

The USAID-funded Community Action Investment Program (CAIP) works with communities vulnerable to conflict in order to help them identify and resolve localized sources of tension. Arslanbob's most pressing concern was to find a way for youth to spend their non-school hours productively, thereby creating a healthy alternative to the questionable activities offered by Hizbuti recruiters

Community representatives decided to refurbish and equip the gymnasium of the local secondary school. However, they remained unsure of how to approach the local Imam, a highly respected community member, whose moral support of any project funded through American (i.e., non-Muslim) sources would be key to its success.

After the gym was completed, the school principal provided a tour for the Imam, who proved to be very impressed with the community's effort, and agreed strongly that this more positive outlet for youth energy would make them less vulnerable to external negative influences.